

VIII. COMMUNITY FACILITIES

A. Introduction

Salem's community facilities include its schools and its library, as well as the facilities that house its municipal government, safety services, and public works. Other special facilities for senior citizens and for adolescents are also included under this broad heading. As the Town continues to grow and develop, the demand for public services grows in similar proportion, and there is a need to plan for facilities from which to provide these public services that are of an adequate size and in appropriate locations.

B. Schools

1. Introduction

Salem's public school system dates back to 1798 when the first schoolhouse in Town was built. In 1885, the Salem School District was established, and in 1925, after a number of years of contracting to provide secondary education, the District built the Woodbury School as its first high school. In the post World War II era, the Woodbury School was expanded several times and investment began in the current set of buildings that comprise the Town's public schools. Salem currently has six elementary schools, the initial construction of which took place over a thirteen-year period between 1954 and 1967. Half of these have undergone a major expansion or renovation, while one has twice received a substantial investment in improvements. In 1966 when Salem High School was built, Woodbury became a middle school and since that time, both the high and middle schools have twice undergone major expansions or renovations. Table VIII-1 contains a summary of data relative to the District's schools including size, capacity, and current enrollment.

2. Elementary Schools

Five of Salem's elementary schools are dispersed throughout central Salem, and one school is located in North Salem (the school locations are displayed on Exhibit 4). In 1998, an analysis of the elementary schools was undertaken by the Salem School Board Planning Committee for the purpose of determining the amount of space needed for the inclusion of public kindergarten along with grades 1 through 5 within the elementary school system. It was determined that a seventh elementary school would be needed to accommodate the requisite number of kindergarten classes in each of the schools. The decision to provide kindergarten was deferred until there is a need for additional building capacity for grades 1 through 5; however, a site was identified and acquired by the Salem School District on North Main Street, adjacent to Wheeler Dam, which is appropriately located and adequate sized to accommodate a seventh elementary school. As noted in Table VIII-1, the current elementary school enrollment is at 91% of the combined capacity of the six schools with individual school enrollments ranging from a low of 83% of capacity (Soule) to a high of 96% of capacity (North Salem). However, as indicated in Table 2, the Salem School District's projections indicate that the total elementary enrollment will decline slightly over the coming decade to 87% of capacity.

TABLE VIII-1
Salem's Public Schools

School	Construction / Expansion Dates	Site Area (acres)	Number of Classrooms	Current Enrollment (2000/2001)	Capacity	Enrollment as a % of Capacity
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Barron	1967, 1968	17.72	18	403	425	95%
Fisk	1957, 1995	12.4	15	304	325	94%
Haigh	1954, 1962, 1995	7.75	11	255	275	93%
Lancaster	1967	10	18	323	375	86%
North Salem	1967	14	18	408	425	96%
Soule	1962, 1995	5.6	15	270	325	83%
Elementary Totals		67.47	95	1963	2150	91%
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Woodbury Middle	1925, 1949, 1955, 1960, 1978, 1995	16	48	1153	1200	96%
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Salem High	1966, 1969, 1988	52.61	95	1886	2100	90%
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District Totals		136.08	238	5002	5450	92%

Source: *Salem School District, 2000*

Table VIII-2
Salem School District Enrollment History and Projections
1997-2010

Year	Grades 1-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12 Salem only	District Totals Salem only	Grades 9-12 w/ Windham	District Totals w/ Windham
1997	1937	1062	1199	4198	1670	4669
1998	1917	1109	1270	4296	1770	4796
1999	1909	1128	1354	4391	1849	4886
2000	1953	1147	1362	4462	1838	4938
2001	1920	1192	1422	4534	1928	5040
2002	1892	1213	1445	4550	1979	5084
2003	1905	1221	1445	4571	2003	5129
2004	1890	1189	1527	4606	2109	5188
2005	1870	1192	1539	4601	2125	5187
2006	1863	1209	1538	4610	2123	5195
2007	1878	1178	1560	4616	2144	5200
2008	1873	1169	1534	4576	2100	5142
2009	1874	1156	1539	4569	2104	5134
2010	1879	1168	1550	4597	2119	5166
Capacity	2150	1200	2100	5450	2100	5450

Projections based on 5-year averages

Source: Salem School District, 2000

3. Secondary Schools

The former high school, now Woodbury Middle School, has served the community well for the past 75 years, sustaining five expansion and renovation projects in its changing role within the District. Now housing grades 6 through 8, the school=s present enrollment is at 96% of its

capacity. As indicated in Table VIII-2, the enrollment will reach and even slightly surpass the capacity during the next ten years prior to returning to current levels.

Salem High School is a regional vocational education center, serving students from the Timberlane Regional High School, Pinkerton Academy, and Pelham High School as well as high school students from Windham. Salem High School is also an Authorized Regional Enrollment Area (AREA) school by agreement with the Town of Windham, and takes the high school students from that community which does not have its own high school. The AREA agreement is renewed every ten years with the next renewal period to begin in 2008. At present, Windham is evaluating whether to construct their own high school and to withdraw from the AREA agreement, while the Salem School District has developed a plan for another addition to Salem High School should Windham choose to continue the AREA agreement. Currently, the high school enrollment is at 90% of its capacity. As indicated in Table VIII-2, Salem High School will exceed its capacity by 2004 with the continued enrollment of Windham students and without the addition of more classrooms. If Windham withdraws from the AREA agreement and does build its own high school, Table VIII-2 reveals that the remaining enrollment of Salem and regional vocational students will only represent 74% of capacity. Aside from the capacity issues that relate to the AREA agreement, the only other substantial facility concern at Salem High School is the library and media center which are deemed substandard. A plan has been prepared for an addition to the school, which would provide an upgraded library and media facility.

C. Municipal Governmental Facilities

Salem's Town Hall and District Court adjoin each other on the east side of Geremonty Drive, each surrounded by respective designated parking lots. The Town Hall houses the Town's administrative offices for all municipal functions other than safety services and public works. The Knightly Room on the lower level of the Town Hall is the primary public meeting room for Town boards and commissions, although other conference rooms in the Town Hall are used for smaller meetings. The number of public committees trying to meet, and the number of meetings per committee continues to increase, taxing the ability of these rooms to meet the demand for use.

The District Court was constructed about 20 years ago with substantial internal expansion space that was provided in anticipation of the need for additional courtrooms to handle the growing caseload. There are three courtrooms now available and used by Salem's judicial staff comprised of one full time and two part time judges. The building also houses an unfinished space that can be fitted up into a fourth courtroom. The looming need is for the creation of additional parking spaces. At present, on certain days the lot is full, and parking overflows onto Geremonty Drive. This circumstance is likely to occur at a greater frequency as the caseload expands. There appears to be adequate adjacent Town owned land upon which more parking could be constructed in reasonable proximity to the Court.

D. Public Safety Facilities

Over the past century, the provision of fire and police services have evolved from part-time, and in the case of the fire department, volunteer activities, to full time, professionally staffed and equipped municipal departments. In the new millennium, these departments may be joined under the banner of a Department of Public Safety.

1. Fire Department

The modern era of fire fighting in Salem began in 1905 when a local concern for insurance rates brought about a review by the National Board of Fire Underwriters. This review led to construction of early firehouses and a formalized system of volunteer firefighters, and later, in 1924, to the purchase of the Town=s first fire truck. While the current Fire Department facilities still include the North Salem Station which dates back to the era of volunteer companies in 1910, the Central Station was constructed in 1964 and the South Salem Station was added in 1974. The Salem Fire Department has a total of 65 personnel, and is organized into four companies. One company at each station can answer both fire and medical emergencies, while the fourth company, housed at Central Station, is dedicated to fire related incidents.

Changes in services as well as in the growth and development of the community bear on the current needs and concerns of the Fire Department. Emergency medical services have become a standard part of the services provided by the Fire Department, and now comprise approximately 60% of the calls received. The ability to provide medical services has been maximized in the current departmental organization into companies, and another company will be needed to respond to increases in demand for this type of service.

Whatever the nature of the call for emergency service, a crucial aspect in rendering the service is a timely response. Salem=s physical development and the related growth in traffic is a cause for concern in providing timely emergency service to certain parts of the community and during certain times of day. The three current stations are all located east of Route 28, and the residences and businesses that lie west of Route 28 are becoming increasingly difficult to reach in times of peak traffic congestion on the roads crossing Route 28 and leading to West Salem. Over the past three years, calls for service from this area have made up between 40% and 47% of all calls in the community. At minimum, a new fire station in West Salem needs to be constructed and equipped, and a request for the same has been placed in the Capital Improvements Program.

Other physical plant needs include the replacement of the North Salem Station, which is considered functionally obsolescent. This request has also has been placed in the Capital Improvements Program. In addition, the Fire Department has joined with the Police Department in proposing a new Public Safety Headquarters which would merge the current Police Station, and the Central and South Salem Fire Stations into a single facility. Along with the efficiencies of combined training facilities, as well as dispatching and emergency operations, the new headquarters would represent functional advancement and locational improvement for the Fire Department.

Water for fire suppression is obviously a critical need and as noted in the Public Utility Chapter, the Fire Department has encountered difficulties with water pressure related to the Manor Parkway Booster Station serving the industrial area off of Pelham Road. In areas of Town where there is no municipal water service, cisterns of a 10,000 gallon capacity are now required for new developments, and the Department has put in a request in the Capital Improvements Program for a tanker truck to improve service to those previously developed areas lacking public water supply. A system of dry hydrants was abandoned in the 1980's and the Town has since been dependent on tankers provided under mutual aid agreements to serve these areas of the community.

The disastrous flooding of the latter half of the 1990's has focused more attention on another of the emergency services rendered by the Salem Fire Department. The Fire Chief is also the Town=s Emergency Management Director and the Department plays a substantial role in emergency preparedness, warnings, and response.

Other areas of Fire Department service of relevance to the Town=s growth and development are in the area of safety inspection and fire prevention including review of the local use and siting of hazardous materials, review of new site plan and subdivision developments, and inspection of fire alarms, sprinklers, exits, and storage areas within existing structures.

2. Police Department

It was not until 1955 that the Town authorized a full-time Chief of Police, and the Department that year consisted of four permanent officers. In 1963, funds were appropriated to construct a new Police Station on Veterans Memorial Drive. Now some 37 years later, that same building, with various permanent and temporary additions totaling about 9,000 square feet, houses a force comprised of 59 officers as part of an overall Department consisting of 75 full-time and 30 part-time employees. Contemporary standards would dictate that a Police Department of that size would require approximately 30,000 square feet of floor area. As discussed in conjunction with the analysis of the Fire Department, a Public Safety Facility has been proposed to address the space need crisis for the Police Department while offering the benefits of shared dispatching and emergency operations as well as combined training facilities. A site in Abanaki Park had been proposed for the complex, but the recent decision relative to dedicating that location to the Senior Center has left the Public Safety Facility in need of a site that locationally will meet the Fire Department=s response time standards for Central and South Salem.

E. Public Works Facilities

The Salem Public Works Department is a multifaceted agency which is responsible for the maintenance of all of the Town=s roads including the drainage facilities for the same, as well as maintenance of the Town=s parks. The Department is also in charge of the operation of the cemeteries and the Transfer Station as well as landscaping and groundskeeping for Town properties. Its role in the operation of Town utility systems is discussed in the Public Utilities Chapter.

The Public Works headquarters are located on Cross Street on a site that is deemed adequate for the functions housed there, but which suffers from the same traffic problems encountered by the Fire Department in terms of dispatching equipment with a destination easterly of Route 28, particularly at certain peak hours.

The Department is responsible for road surface maintenance and snow removal from 350 lane miles of roadway. A long-term capital improvement program for roadway reconstruction and resurfacing was begun in 1990 and updated in 1996 with improvements scheduled through 2006. Drainage improvements to address surface runoff problems are also addressed in conjunction with road reconstruction projects.

The Public Works Department operates and maintains the Town=s two cemeteries, Pine Grove, located at the intersection of Main Street and North Main Street, and Mount Pleasant on East Broadway. Currently, the Capital Improvement Program includes the development of gravesites in Pine Grove on a second acre out a total development of five acres which was begun in 1998. A total of 3,000 graves will be prepared on the five acres, sufficient to meet the Town=s needs for 20 to 25 years.

With the termination of landfill activity at the Shannon Road site, and the passage of a mandatory recycling ordinance, the operation of the Transfer Station on Shannon Road, and the oversight of contracts for disposal sites are a major responsibility of the Public Works Department. The Capital Improvement Program contains an item for the implementation of the plan for closure of the Shannon Road landfill once the plan is approved by the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services.

As park facilities expand, there will be a need for more departmental manpower or contracted services in order to maintain these facilities. Public Works is also responsible for street tree maintenance and for coordinating with volunteer groups who agree to landscape public properties and areas such as traffic islands.

F. Library

For 71 years beginning in 1895, Salem=s public library was operated out of a former schoolhouse, now known as the Alice Hall Memorial Library, next to the old Town Hall on Main Street. In 1966, five years after the death of its benefactor and namesake, the newly constructed Kelley Library was dedicated on a parcel at the corner of Main Street and Geremonty Drive. A new wing was completed in 1978, which was later named in honor of former Library Director Edward V. Reed, and the total floor area of the library was expanded to the present 22,000 square feet. The adjacent parking lot provides for 60 parking spaces which presents a problem for use of the library=s large meeting room which has a capacity of 90 persons. As there are no on-street parking spaces in the vicinity, the use of the meeting room is limited to 30 persons in order to preserve some parking spaces for other library patrons. The present library site has no additional room for expansion of either the building or the parking lot. As the land abutting the

library to the south along Geremonty Drive is mostly wetlands, the only option for expansion of library facilities is to the west along Main Street.

G. Other Facilities

Special facilities for two special segments of Salem=s population have been identified, analyzed, and pursued by the citizens of Salem and their town government. A center for Salem=s senior citizens, and another for its teenagers have received much attention and effort from both standing and special committees.

1. Senior Center

The Senior Center is poised to move forward with a substantial private contribution toward its construction and a decision by the Board of Selectmen to have it located on land included within Abanaki Park at the corner of Geremonty Drive and Veterans Memorial Parkway. The facility is planned as a 10,000 square foot structure incorporating meeting rooms and recreational facilities for Salem=s senior citizens.

2. Teen Center

Another citizen committee has been developing a plan for a teen center aimed at providing activities for junior and senior high school age youth for after school hours and non-school days. It is viewed as a complement to the Salem Boys and Girls Club, which serves youth of elementary school to junior high age. The committee has reviewed examples of teen centers in other communities and conducted a survey of local teens to determine the level of interest. A building of approximately 8,000 square feet is desired as a starting point to house game rooms, computer rooms, a television room, a kitchen and a snack area. The building would be designed to accommodate the eventual addition of a gymnasium and pool, or arrangements could be made to share the use of other such existing facilities. Locationally, the center should be within walking distance of the Woodbury Middle and Salem High Schools. While there had been discussion of constructing a joint senior/teen center with the respective uses on separate levels, the decision on the senior center has focused attention on a single purpose facility. Continued planning for the teen center includes a site search and development of a funding package to construct and operate the center.

H. Community Facilities Recommendations

XPrepare to construct another addition to Salem High School should Windham choose to continue the AREA agreement

XConstruct an upgraded library and media facility at Salem High School

XPlan and construct an addition to the Town Hall to accommodate additional public meeting room space

XPlan for expanded District Court parking facilities on adjacent Town owned land in reasonable proximity to the Court

XConstruct and equip a new fire station in West Salem

XReplace the functionally obsolescent North Salem Station

XConstruct and equip a new Police Station or further consider a new combined Public Safety Headquarters

X Implementation of a plan for closure of the Shannon Road landfill once the plan is approved by the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES)

X Provide the necessary fiscal, physical, and human resources to properly maintain the Town=s parks

XAcquire land abutting the Kelley Library to allow for future expansion of Library facilities

XSupport the development of a Senior Center and a Teen Center for the respective age-related segments of Salem=s citizenry

Supporting Studies and References

XSalem High School Library & Media Center - An Investment in the Future, Salem School Board, Salem, NH, undated.

XSalem School District Elementary School Specifications, Salem School Board Planning Committee, September, 1998.

XSalem School District Annual Report, February, 2000.

XInterview with Dr. Henry LaBranche, Superintendent of Schools, August 15, 2000.

XInterview with Salem Fire Chief John Nadeau, August 15, 2000.

XInterview with Salem Chief of Police Stephen MacKinnon, August 15, 2000.

XInterviews with Public Works Director Rodney Bartlett, August 15 and 23, 2000.

XInterview with Salem Town Manager David W. Owen, September 5, 2000.

XInterview with Community Development Director E. James Turse, October 26, 2000.

XTelephone interview with District Court Justice John A. Korbey, December 4, 2000.

